

Main Street Matters

AUGUST 2019 • A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM

WONDERFUL WOMEN IN WAXAHACHIE

In the fall of 2016, the Waxahachie Main Street Program and Waxahachie Convention & Visitors Bureau were approached by Janine Pettit, host of the *Girl Camper* podcast and contributor to *GoRving.com* and *Country Living Magazine*, about hosting women's outdoor adventure show centering around vintage and new trailers camped in Getzendaner Park. The podcast has listeners nationwide that are encouraged and inspired by the host, Ms. Pettit, to overcome their fears of camping through inspirational interviews with women who have made the leap. "Going Places. Doing Things." is the motto of the *Girl Camper*.

cont. on next page



Wonderful Women in Waxahachie Campers



Decorated Trailers



Campground Site - Getzendaner Park

AWARD-WINNING WONDERFUL WOMEN IN WAXAHACHIE



*By Anita Brown Simpson, Main Street
Manager, Waxahachie*

*Wonderful Women in Waxahachie was the 2018 TDA
President's Winner for Best Promotional Event.*

After listening to Pettit promote the historic charm of Waxahachie and being centrally located in Texas, Waxahachie has become a popular destination for first-time campers. Downtown Waxahachie would be the main attraction to draw these women to Texas from all around the United States. In addition to nature, the real beauty of Getzendaner Park is that it conveniently connects to Main Street and is only 12 blocks from the courthouse square. Campers could also access downtown Waxahachie via the scenic route of the Waxahachie Creek Hike & Bike Trail that runs from the park to downtown.

The main goal of Wonderful Women in Waxahachie was to introduce and attract a whole new demographic—women outdoor adventure enthusiasts—to downtown Waxahachie. Always on the lookout for new and interesting events and groups to share our wonderful community with, Waxahachie jumped on the chance to host this group. To ensure the success of the event, the Girl Camper invited her friends, founders of Sisters on the Fly, to cohost the event, and they graciously accepted the invite. Sisters on the Fly is an international membership organization that consists of over 10,000 members with the motto of “Having More Fun than Anyone.” Waxahachie had “Sisters” represented from all regions of the state of Texas at the Wonderful Women in Waxahachie.

The estimated attendance of Wonderful Women in Waxahachie in 2018 was 100 registered campers representing 13 states (AZ, CA, CO, KS, KY, MI, MO, NY, OK, PA, SC, WA, and TX) and one

international destination (New Zealand), plus hundreds of spectators that visited Waxahachie to tour the decorated trailers and campsites. Also in attendance were other bloggers and podcasters such as Kate Dunbar - KatesCuriousKitchen.com and contributor to RV Family Travel Atlas's *Campground of the Week*; Instagrammer Jill Jones Evans – @trailerandwagon; and Tiffany Bonner – WhereisTiffany.com.

Wonderful Women in Waxahachie impacted the community and contributed to the revitalization of our downtown/commercial district in multiple ways, including:

- **Publicity** – Downtown Waxahachie has been featured on multiple episodes of the *Girl Camper* podcast from 2017 to present day not only promoting the Wonderful Women in Waxahachie event, but other events like the Farm-to-Table event that takes place in the month of November, keeping Waxahachie top of mind with that audience year-round.

The event has proven to serve as a media trip for travel bloggers just as much as an outdoor adventure show for women with multiple bloggers in attendance from Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Kentucky. This is publicity for downtown Waxahachie that would not be possible without the appeal of this event.

- **Economic Impact** – The real motto of most of these women is “Shop ‘til You Drop, Then Crawl.” It was reported by our Waxahachie Downtown Merchants Association that this group of 100 campers, plus their followers, made a big impact on their business that weekend, and stood out above the other traffic that was created by some large regional events taking place that same weekend.



Campers from New Zealand

The attendees also make an economic impact on the Crossroads of Texas Film & Music Festival held in conjunction with the Wonderful Women in Waxahachie event because part of their registration fee pays for a VIP pass to the film and music event. Part of Waxahachie's commitment to host the campers includes providing food and parties for the women in the evening, so the Crossroads of Texas Film & Music Festival accomplishes that goal for the Wonderful Women, plus adds attendance and flair to Film & Music Festival.

- **Social Media** – Through Janine Pettit's *Girl Camper* connection with GoRVing.com, she was allowed to host a Facebook Live event from Getzendaner Park in Waxahachie for their 765,000 Facebook followers, of which 23,000 viewed.

Wonderful Women in Waxahachie is the perfect example of "conversion catalyst" whereby we turn a social visitor into a social agent. The attendees tend to be some of the savviest at creating "Facebook envy" by posting photos of everything that they do every step of the way; therefore, the reach of 100 women combined with dedicated group pages of the Sisters on the Fly and Girl Camper = priceless social agents.

The majority of the attendees also went the extra mile on Facebook to thank the City of Waxahachie for working so hard to make their stay perfect and acknowledging the community pride that they witnessed. All of the above represent a breadth of "advertising" we could not afford to purchase.

- **Word of mouth back to all regions of the country and beyond** – The Wonderful Women in Waxahachie have proven to be great brand ambassadors for downtown Waxahachie. In 2017, there were only 10 registered campers at the event that created a unique bond, and they traveled together to many campouts during the course of the year telling their story that began in Waxahachie. They recruited 90 more women from 13 different states and New Zealand to join them in 2018, and we know it will grow even larger in the future.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

REBECCA GLEASON,
BASTROP MAIN STREET MANAGER



1. What is your hometown?

I grew up in Cranbury, NJ and then went to high school in Katy. Although I grew up on the East Coast, I was born in Houston, and my mama says that makes me a Texan!

2. What Main Street city do you represent and how long have you been there?

I am proud to have been a part of the Bastrop Main Street Program since January of this year. It has been a whirlwind entering a new industry, new community, and new chapter this year, but I wouldn't trade a minute of it!

3. What is your favorite spot in your downtown and why?

There is no way I can pick just one when we have so many magical spots! Live music at the 602 on Main, pineapple upside down cupcakes from Simply Sweet, community plays at the Bastrop Opera House, hand-tossed pizza at Neighbor's overlooking the river, Art After Dark at the Lost Pines Art Center, rainwater moonshine at Copper Shop Distillery, ice cold cider from the Bastrop Beer Company - do you see what I mean? How could a girl ever choose?

cont. on next page

MESQUITE SMALL BUSINESS WORKSHOPS 'POWER UP' ODDS FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS



By Beverly Abell, Main Street Manager, Mesquite

We've all been there – a downtown business prospect has a great idea, a location all picked out, and a lot of enthusiasm. Then there's this: the prospect doesn't have a business plan. The marketing plan consists of one social media platform managed casually. Cash flow? What's that? You mean I have to have a permit for signs?

That lack of planning doesn't bode well for the future of a business, and it certainly isn't a boost for a downtown that could gain a reputation for failure if a series of poorly planned businesses go under. How do you increase the odds for your entrepreneurs and your downtown? You provide your entrepreneurs—emerging and existing—with information and a plan of action. And how do you do that? In a variety of ways.

It was recognized that one of the biggest issues in Mesquite was connecting entrepreneurs to the myriad of resources available in the area. From small business counseling at the Small Business Development Center to classes at the local community college, the resources were found to exist, but the connection to entrepreneurs was missing.

So, how to make that connection? The first answer to that question came in the form of Entrepreneurs Day. The first priority was to hold the event during a time

4. What do you enjoy the most about the Main Street program?

The thing I enjoy most about being a part of the Main Street program is the community. The Bastrop community has been so warm and welcoming in the most genuine of ways, and I have treasured my time here.

5. What is the best piece of advice you've ever received?

The best piece of advice I've ever received is to stay out of the politics. As you can imagine, being a part of local government is not easy, but I've realized that the Main Street program is here to serve the ENTIRE community, meaning that there is not a group we will not partner with or a business we will not continue to serve.

6. What's your favorite tip for someone in our economic development/downtown revitalization industry?

Taking on the mission of downtown economic development is like trying to put together a thousand-piece puzzle with no picture for reference. It can at times feel impossible and overwhelming but know that you are not alone. There is a small army of equally passionate Main Streeters all over the nation trying to put together the same puzzle. Ask for help, look to what your Main Street family is doing, continue learning, try again, and make all decisions with the best of intentions.

cont. on next page



Segio Bento of the SBDC, speaker at the E1 Workshop

frame convenient for the target market: people who still had a day job but wanted to take steps toward becoming an entrepreneur. Therefore, the event stretched from late afternoon to early evening.

Second, multiple resources and subjects were available to attendees in one setting. Short introductory sessions were held at four different tables in a large open space downtown. Experts in planning, opening, running, and expanding a business were at four different tables in the space. The experts would speak briefly on their area of expertise and then converse with attendees, who had the option of attending only one roundtable or eventually going to three of the four since the roundtables repeated throughout the evening.

There were two short keynote addresses by successful property and business developers. A marketing roundtable continued throughout the event as well as a private room that served as a one-on-one consulting space manned by a very successful restaurant entrepreneur. In addition, there was an available property tour conducted downtown.

Entrepreneurs Day was a rousing success and awakened the BRE partners to the demand for small business development services. The result was the partnership's current small business development workshop series: Entrepreneurship to the Fourth Power (or E4), a four-part workshop series.

As with Entrepreneurs Day, the series focuses on critical elements of small business development and management. The workshops were set for evenings (again, the best timing for those who are still in the planning stage) in June, July, August, and October. The cost of each class is \$10, or \$35 for all four.

E1, Planning for Success, was held in mid-June with around 20 students who learned about eight essential steps in starting and operating a small business. The session lasted more than an hour, yet not one participant left early due to the great speaker and vital information. Reviews have been extremely positive. The remaining three workshops are: Money: Where It Is and How to Get It; Marketing and Sales Strategies; and Budgeting and Financials.

7. Who has been the most influential person in your career?

My family has been the most influential people when it has come to my career. Each and every one of them. As a first generation college student, it took a village for me to obtain an education with everyone from my granny to my cousins supporting me along the way. Each and every time I have felt lost they have pulled me back and reminded me to focus on the basics. Always show up, work hard, do the right thing, and smile like you mean it.

8. What's your favorite inspirational quote?

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." – Margaret Mead

9. What's the hardest lesson you've learned?

The hardest lesson I have ever learned is that it will always be okay. No matter who comes and goes from your life, no matter what you lose, no matter how your heart breaks - know that given time you will be okay. More than okay, you will thrive again if you just have faith.

10. What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Spare time? What's that? As a Main Streeter, spare time can be hard to come by, but there will always be things that are non-negotiable for me – time for nephew Smilin Jack, time to read my cozy mysteries from the library, and time for trashy reality television.



Participants at E1, Planning for Success Workshop

The BRE partners also have a business visitation program and work to provide training and workforce development services to larger employers in the area. There are also multiple networking and educational opportunities for all segments of the business community that focus on everything from assistance for HR managers to showcasing outstanding examples of innovative business spaces.

“E4 is a natural result of Mesquite’s focus on strengthening and supporting its small business community,” said Kim Buttram, City of Mesquite Assistant Director of Economic Development. “By paying attention to the needs of our small business audience, we feel we have put together a growing set of resources that will contribute to the success of our businesses and community.”

Two more entrepreneur workshops in the four-part small business workshop series are set for upcoming dates: “Marketing and Sales Strategies” on August 27 and “Budgeting and Financials” on October 15. For more information and to register, <http://mesquitecodev.com/about-us/events>.

THE TEXAS HERITAGE TRAILS PROGRAM: NOT YOUR MAMA’S HERITAGE TOURISM



By Sarah Page, Heritage Tourism Program Coordinator, Texas Historical Commission

When I was a kid, my mom would occasionally let me skip school to visit a site important to Texas’ history. While it was cool to skip school—yes, even with your parents—we always seemed to visit the same two places. I’m sure I was the only kid in my class who had visited the Alamo and the Governor’s Mansion over a dozen times by the time I started high school.

I didn’t know it back then, but we were heritage tourists. The Texas Historical Commission defines heritage tourism as travel to experience the heritage of a city, region, state, or country. Mom may have lacked in providing a diversity of experiences, but she was an early adopter of the idea that travel can be educational and fun at the same time.

If only she’d had a framework like our [Texas Heritage Trails Program](#) to help us plan trips back in the 70s. The Texas Heritage Trails Program (THTP) is the Texas Historical Commission’s award-winning heritage tourism initiative. The program brings together 10 different heritage regions (and the communities within them) across the state to partner and promote Texas’ historic and cultural resources. Together, these regions are an incredible resource for helping travelers explore Texas’ historic and cultural treasures. Many of these places are found in your downtowns, the heart of your community.

Did you know that 24.5% of all leisure visitors to Texas participate in cultural activities? And that

Main Street is Economic Development

\$202.6 Million
TOTAL DOWNTOWN REINVESTMENT

255

small businesses and 824 jobs were created.



60,386

volunteer hours

(= \$ value of \$1.5 million contributed to local programs to support the revitalization effort)

In the first two quarters of 2019, Texas’ 90 designated Main Street communities reported the following reinvestment into their Main Street districts.

22.1% of them also enjoy libation and culinary activities? This means that travelers are coming to your towns to enjoy historic sites, touring and sightseeing, the arts, wineries, distilleries, breweries, and to experience your local culinary scene. The THTP promotes experiences like these all over the state of Texas and, more importantly, in your downtowns.

Do you want to know more about the Texas Heritage Trails Program? There are an unlimited number of ways to get involved. From attending board meetings and educational events, collaboration on projects, promotion of local heritage events and attractions, to cooperative advertising, and more, there is bound to be a way for your Main Street organization to be an active participant in your trail region.

Each heritage trail region is managed by a non-profit organization that partners with communities, heritage organizations and attractions, the state of Texas, and other organizations to promote Texas' heritage and cultural assets. The goal is that by working together, we can increase visitation and bring more dollars to Texas communities.

Sound good? To learn more about the program and the trail region your community is in, just visit texasimetravel.com. Join us in telling the real stories about the real places of Texas.



San Felipe



McKinney



Bastrop



Denison



Texas DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION

CONFERENCE

hosted by City of Georgetown

OCTOBER 29 - NOVEMBER 1

2019

FOR REGISTRATION, SPONSORSHIP &
EXHIBITING INFORMATION VISIT
www.texasdowntown.org



PHOENIX | RESTORATION & CONSTRUCTION present



REAL PLACES

PRESERVING HISTORIC TEXAS
2020 CONFERENCE

JANUARY 29-31, AUSTIN

REALPLACES.US

MAIN STREET *Now* CONFERENCE

JOIN US NEXT YEAR
IN THE LONE STAR STATE
AS WE CELEBRATE

40 YEARS OF THE
MAIN STREET MOVEMENT!

DALLAS, TX // MAY 18-20, 2020

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS
(SPEAKER SUBMISSIONS) DUE AUGUST 19**
MAINSTREET.ORG/HOWWECANHELP/MAINSTREETNOW/CALLFORPROPOSALS



**National Main Street
Center**
a subsidiary of the
National Trust *for* Historic Preservation



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

